



The initiative comes at a crucial time as Pakistan grapples with economic challenges, including high inflation rates and soaring electricity bills

Federal Minister for Petroleum
Musadik Malik

Interior minister visits FIA HQs

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday vowed to crackdown on corruption and improve the agency's efficiency.

He was addressing officer after reaching Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Headquarters where he was welcomed by Director General (DG) FIA. He said corruption will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Corruption is the evil of our society, there will be zero tolerance on it.

He said that FIA is a very important institution of national security and safety, it has to be upgraded and brought to international standards.

The minister directed, pending promotion cases should be disposed of within thirty days, to encourage officers.

He said like promotion were given in every department in Punjab, in the same way, promotions should be given to eligible employees in FIA.

The efficiency of the institution will be proved when the big fish are caught, said the interior minister adding that through effective measures, the scourge of fake medicines will also have to be eradicated from the country.

Naqvi urged the FIA to play a more active role in preventing power theft and human trafficking.

He sought a comprehensive report on the Greece boat capsizing.

The performance of the officers posted in different countries should also be reviewed, he said.

A comprehensive plan should be formulated to stop the smuggling of dollars getting out of the country, the minister directed the officials.

Hundi & Hawala businesses will also have to be addressed with effective measures and entry and exit from the country on fake documents should also be stopped, Naqvi said.

Good work has been done with respect to Interpol, it can also be improved, he said adding that it is also very important to enhance the efficiency of the officers and align them with the modern requirements through training. The condition of police stations will also have to be improved, the minister said adding that all resources should be utilized to improve public service delivery.

Khawaja Asif assumes charge as Minister for Defence, Defence Production

RAWALPINDI: Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday assumed charge as Minister for Defence and Defence Production.

The Defence Minister was received by Secretary Defence, Lieutenant General (R) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, at Ministry of Defence here, a news release said.

An introductory meeting was conducted with senior Officers. Minister was briefed about the role and functions of Ministries and its executive departments including major ongoing activities.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister for Defence said that the government would provide maximum support to cater for the needs of Armed Forces. APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting at Ministry of Interior. INP

PM reaffirms to ensure timely implementation of CPEC initiatives



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday emphasised that his government would work tirelessly to ensure timely implementation of the initiatives under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He stressed that Pakistan was keen to move to the next phase of CPEC, including operationalisation of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to facilitate Chinese investment in Pakistan.

The prime minister was talking to Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong who called on him at the Prime Minister's House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi and the foreign secretary also attended the meeting.

The prime minister said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) had been created during his previous tenure to attract foreign investment in priority sectors including agriculture, IT, minerals and renewable energy.

He said Chinese companies would find many profitable opportunities in Pakistan.

The prime minister said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) had been created during his previous tenure to attract foreign investment in priority sectors including agriculture, IT, minerals and renewable energy

The prime minister thanked President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang for their warm messages of greetings on his re-election and assumption of office.

He reciprocated the warm sentiments expressed by the Chinese leadership and lauded their contribution and commitment to the strengthening of the iron-clad friendship between Pakistan and China.

The Chinese Ambassador reaffirmed that the Chinese leadership and government was looking forward to further deepening of Pakistan-China friendship.

In this regard, he reiterated the invitation extended to the prime minister to undertake an official visit to China at his earliest convenience.

While accepting the invitation, the prime minister said that he would undertake the visit at a mutually convenient date that would be worked out through diplomatic channels.

Dar receives congratulatory messages from world FMs

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has received congratulatory messages from his counterparts of various countries on assuming his office.

Foreign Minister of Czech Republic Jan Lipavsky, congratulating Ishaq Dar on his appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan said Czechia and Pakistan had long enjoyed friendly and constructive relations.

Foreign Minister of Maldives Moosa Zameer also extended congratulations saying he was confident that the bilateral relations will continue to grow stronger under his leadership.

Responding to his congratulatory message, Foreign Minister Dar posted on X expressed his gratitude to Moosa Zameer and said that he looked forward to working closely with him to promote cooperation between Pakistan and Maldives.

Likewise Ukrainian FM Dmytro Kuleba congratulating Ishaq Dar on his appointment as Pakistan's 39th Foreign Minister wished him every success in his most responsible mission. "I look forward to expanding mutually beneficial bilateral and international cooperation between Ukraine and Pakistan", he added.

Reciprocating to his post, FM Ishaq Dar said Pakistan valued its ties with Ukraine. "Look forward to working with you to further solidify Pakistan-Ukraine relations for the benefit of our people and for strengthening our cooperation at int'l fora!" the foreign minister posted on X.



RAWALPINDI: General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain National Guard, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

According to the statement issued by ISPR, the matters of bilateral professional interest and further strengthening of security and defence cooperation between the two countries were discussed during the meeting. Both sides reiterated the resolve to further strengthen security and defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary. PR

Shaza calls for completion of all IT projects within specified timelines



the IT and Telecom sector and attract investments in the sector.

The meeting was attended by IT Secretary Hassan Nasir Jami, Additional Secretary Aisha Humera Moriani, and senior officials of the Ministry of IT.

Various subsidiary departments of the Ministry of IT, including NTC, PTA, Universal Service Fund, and other government entities, were present in the meeting.

During the session, detailed presentations were given on the workings of the Ministry of IT, the IT sector landscape, Telecom Ecosystem, and the Ministry's projects.

Officials from NTC, PTA, and Universal Service Fund also briefed the attendees about their respective projects and initiatives. APP

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, on Wednesday, called for the completion of all Information Technology projects within specified timelines.

Presiding over a meeting, she directed the efficient utilization of funds for all projects. She pledged efforts to accelerate the promotion of

Law minister chairs meeting of anti-corruption task force

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazir Tarar on Wednesday emphasized on the need of capacity building programs and collaboration among departments to combat financial corruption effectively. The law minister was chairing the 2nd meeting of the Anti-Corruption Task Force which was attended by representatives from various relevant departments including FIA, SECP, FMU, CCP and Finance Division. During the meeting, input was obtained from the stakeholders, said a press release.

During the meeting, all representatives shared valuable suggestions to address the critical issues of financial corruption and money laundering. The law minister emphasized the importance of collective efforts and urged the stakeholders to submit their suggestions by the 20th of March to formulate a comprehensive framework. The minister highlighted the necessity for a behavioral shift in addition to drafting laws and policies. The meeting reached a consensus on the need for capacity building programs and collaboration among departments to combat financial corruption effectively. APP

Govt target is improvement of economy of the country irrespective of IMF: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb

Says PM Shehbaz Sharif has a clear vision regarding improvement of economy of the country



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that their target is improvement of economy of the country irrespective of International Monetary Fund (IMF).

While talking to media persons in Islamabad, Muhammad Aurangzeb said that government's utmost priority is bringing transparency in tax system, adding they want there should be 10 percent of taxes in the national income. He said that they want a long term program from IMF, adding Pakistan will try to take big program than that of its quota. He said the country will take a longest term program from IMF, adding continuity in IMF program will maintain economy discipline.

He said that their target is improvement of economy of the country irrespective of IMF, adding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has a clear vision regarding improvement of economy of the country. He said the Prime Minister has strictly ordered to maintain economy discipline. He said there is no obstacle in taking last installment from IMF. He said they are making preparations for taking new loans from IMF.

He said that economic stability is the joint target of IMF and the government of Pakistan. He noted the interim government efficiently worked for the improvement of the economy of the country, particularly Fawad Hasan Fawad took interest and did hard work in this regard. Muhammad

Aurangzeb said that they want to collect tax income with digital way.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Aurangzeb visited the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Headquarters and presided over a meeting to review revenue collection performance of FBR. The Chairman FBR Malik Anjed Zubair Tiwana and Members of the Board attended the meeting.

Chairman FBR extended a warm welcome to the Minister on behalf of the FBR team. He gave a detailed presentation on the revenue collection efforts and various revenue generation initiatives taken by FBR as well as issues currently being faced in revenue administration.

The minister was briefed that FBR has successfully achieved the cumulative revenue collection target for the first eight months of the current financial year and is committed to achieve the overall target as well. The Finance Minister appreciated the FBR team for their efforts in meeting the targets.

He called for expediting the reform process and digitisation of FBR for better performance and enhanced revenue generation. The Minister also directed to evolve a mechanism to ensure transparency in tax collection system. He assured the FBR team of his complete support in the performance of their duties and directed to increase their efforts to achieve the true tax potential. SABAH

Pak-Qatar sign agreements to boost employment opportunities for Pakistanis in Qatar



ISLAMABAD: The government of Pakistan and Qatar have signed several agreements and letter's of Intent (LOIs) with top Qatari companies the main purpose of this initiative was set to significantly enhance employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in Qatar. An official source told APP, the sign-

ing of these Agreements with renowned Qatari firms, including Qatari Diyar-Saudi Bin Laden Group Construction (QD-SBG), Hamad Bin Khaled Contracting Company W.L.L (HBK), Ali Bin Ali Holding W.L.L, Sheikh Jabor Bin Mansour Holding, Tabeeb Care Medical Services, and Al Rawnaq International Commercial Projects, marks a crucial step in strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar in the field of human resource development.

In addition to these agreements, the Pakistani delegation held a significant meeting with Mr. Hamad Saleh Al Qamra, Chairman of Al Qamra Holding, focusing on the recruitment of Pakistani manpower for various company projects.

The visit also included a tour of the View Hospital, a part of Elegancia Health Care, where the recruitment of Pakistani health professionals is underway following a recent MoU between Elegancia Health Care and the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) of Pakistan.

The primary objective of these initiatives is to create enhanced employment avenues for Pakistani workers in Qatar. SAPM Malik highlighted the potential of Pakistan as a key manpower exporter and detailed the government's efforts to streamline this

process through quality recruitment agencies, skill development, and addressing foreign employers' needs. The CEOs of the Qatari companies expressed satisfaction with the Pakistani workforce and their willingness to increase Pakistani manpower in their companies, adhering to the governmental regulations of Qatar. The meetings also shed light on the growing demand for skilled labor in sectors like services, maintenance, hospitality, and construction, following Qatar's significant infrastructural development.

These agreements and discussions represent a significant stride in increasing the presence of the Pakistani workforce in Qatar, paving the way for mutual economic growth and stronger bilateral ties. APP

Editor-in-Chief: Amna Munawwar Awan
 Editor: Muhammad Hasam
 Office # 408, 4th Floor, Evacuee Trust,
 Agha Khan Road, F-5/1 Islamabad
 Phone: + 92 51 8354964

The rise of nanomaterials

ATTA-UR-RAHMAN

Nanomaterials represent a rapidly emerging industry that is impacting a large number of products ranging from electronics and agriculture to medicine and the defence industry. Nanotechnology depends on the discovery that when materials are reduced to the size of 1 to 100 nanometres (several thousand times less than the width of a human hair), they start exhibiting strange and unique properties. As the size of a material decreases, the proportion of atoms located at the surface increases significantly, resulting in enhanced surface reactivity and interactions. This property is exploited in various applications, such as catalysis, sensing, and drug delivery. This was discovered about five decades ago, and the field has evolved in a dramatic way since then. In Pakistan, the foundations of nanotechnology were laid by me when I was the federal minister of science and technology in 2002 and later as the chairperson of the HEC. I realized the huge potential of this field and established the National Commission on Nano Science and Technology (NCNST). Prof NM Butt, a scientist of international eminence and former director general of PINSTECH, was appointed to head the commission and develop the trained workforce needed by academia and industry. With the efforts of the NCNST, the Pakistan government, through the Ministry of Science and Technology and the HEC, funded nanotechnology research projects at three universities and two research centres to the tune of about Rs800 million from 2003-2008. This was an exciting and important beginning of this field in Pakistan. More recently I highlighted the importance of this field to the attention of Mr Latif Ebrahim Jamal, and as a result the Latif Ebrahim Jamal Nanotechnology Center was built from a magnificent grant by the Husein Ebrahim Jamal Foundation at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences located in the University of Karachi. It has state-of-the-art facilities, and it is carrying out cutting-edge research in various frontier areas of nanopharmaceuticals and other nanomaterials in this rapidly growing field. Nanotechnology covers almost every sphere of human endeavour today. In agriculture, nanotechnology offers innovative solutions to enhance crop productivity, mitigate environmental impacts, and improve food security. Nanomaterials such as nanoparticles and nano fertilizers can be tailored to release nutrients gradually, thereby improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing fertilizer runoff. Nanofiltration devices can provide pure water instantly. Nanosensors enable real-time monitoring of soil conditions, pest infestations, and plant health, facilitating precise management practices. Nanotechnology also contributes to the development of nanopesticides with enhanced efficacy and reduced environmental toxicity, promising sustainable pest management strategies. Turning to the electronics industry, we find that it has been revolutionized by nanotechnology, leading to the miniaturization of electronic components and the development of novel materials with enhanced properties. Nanoscale transistors, such as carbon nanotubes and graphene, offer superior conductivity and thermal stability, enabling faster and more energy-efficient electronic devices. Nanolithography techniques allow for the precise patterning of nanoscale features, paving the way for advanced integrated circuits and high-density storage devices. Furthermore, quantum dots and nanowires exhibit unique optoelectronic properties, enabling the fabrication of next-generation displays, sensors and photovoltaic devices. Nanotechnology has implications for engineering too, enabling the design and fabrication of materials with tailored properties and functionalities. Nanocomposites, composed of nanoscale reinforcements embedded in a matrix, exhibit superior mechanical, thermal, and electrical properties compared to conventional materials. These advanced materials find applications in aerospace, automotive and construction industries, where lightweight, durable, and high-performance materials are essential. Nanotechnology also enables the development of nanomachines and nanorobots capable of performing precise tasks at the molecular level, opening new avenues for nanomanufacturing, nanoelectromechanical systems (NEMS), and nanomedicine. In medicine, nanotechnology holds tremendous promise for revolutionizing diagnosis, treatment and drug delivery. Nanoparticles and nanocarriers can be engineered to target specific cells or tissues, enhancing the efficacy and reducing the side effects of therapeutic agents. Nanomedicine approaches, such as nanoparticle-based imaging contrast agents and targeted drug delivery systems, enable early detection and personalized treatment of diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disorders, and neurological conditions. Nanoscale biosensors and diagnostic devices offer rapid and sensitive detection of biomarkers, pathogens, and toxins, advancing disease monitoring and healthcare management. Nanotechnology finds applications across many other diverse fields, including energy, environment, textiles and cosmetics. In the energy sector, nanomaterials contribute to the development of high-performance batteries and fuel and solar cells, enabling efficient energy storage and conversion technologies. Nanotechnology also plays a crucial role in environmental remediation, wastewater treatment, and pollution control, offering sustainable solutions to mitigate environmental degradation. Moreover, nanofabrication techniques enable the production of functional textiles with enhanced properties, such as stain resistance, UV protection, and antimicrobial properties. In the cosmetics industry, nanoparticles are utilized in sunscreens, skincare products and hair care formulations, offering improved performance and aesthetics. The convergence of nanotechnology and military science has led to groundbreaking innovations that are reshaping the landscape of modern warfare. Nanotechnology offers unique capabilities to enhance military systems, ranging from improving soldier performance to developing advanced weaponry and surveillance technologies. Nanotechnology enables the development of lightweight, flexible, and highly durable body armour by incorporating nanomaterials such as carbon nanotubes and graphene.

The writer is the former federal minister for science and technology and former founding chairman of the HEC. He can be reached at: ibne_sina@hotmail.com



By Askhat Orazbay

On the commencement of Astana's Chairmanship in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

Astana : Being the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), in which Kazakhstan holds the chairmanship for 2024-2026.

I would like to share with the audience information about the activities of IFAS aimed at improving the situation in the Aral Sea basin and serving the interests of the peoples and states of Central Asia for 30 years.

In modern realities, with ubiquitous population growth, rapid economic development of states, and an increase in water consumption per capita, the burden on the environment is steadily increasing. Such an intensification of anthropogenic impact provokes and accelerates the processes of global climate change. In Central Asia, all these processes are proceeding at a faster pace than the global average. The ecological crisis in the Aral Sea basin is accompanied by progressive scarcity and pollution of water resources, land degradation and desertification of vast territories, loss of forests, ecotopes and biodiversity. On a huge area of the dried-up bottom of the Aral Sea, a new desert has formed - Aralkum, with a size of more than 54 thousand square kilometers (for comparison: it is comparable to the territory of Croatia and much larger than Estonia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland). In these tense conditions, it is highly relevant for the Central Asian States to elaborate new mechanisms for developing cooperation in the region. The main goal of the chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the IFAS is to further increase the level of cooperation on the integrated use and protection of water resources, solving environmental problems, socio-economic aspects and introducing elements of a "green" economy in Central Asian countries.

During the period of Kazakhstan's chairmanship, we will continue to implement two main programs approved by the IFAS Board: Aral

Sea Basin Program-4 (ASBP-4) and its systematic monitoring, as well as the Regional Environmental Protection Program for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia (REPPSD CA). The period of implementation of the both Programs - until 2030.

The environmental problem of the Aral Sea began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s, which has led to the fact that there is practically nothing left from the 4th largest lake on our planet. At first, the Aral Sea was divided into two reservoirs, then into three and ...

During the years of Independence, Kazakhstan, with the support of the World Bank, carried out comprehensive work and was able to restore a little part - the Small Aral or the Northern Aral Sea, but this is only about 8% of its original value. The port city of Aralsk is still far from the water, which at first went 100 km away, but after the measures taken it came much closer.

Particles and dust of salts and toxic chemicals left on the drained bottom of the Aral Sea are found not only in the Tien Shan and Pamir mountains, but also far beyond the borders of our region. In order to reduce the removal of harmful substances, the countries of the Aral Sea region are actively engaged in phytoremediation measures, planting of saxaul (Haloxylon) and other vegetation.

But are plantings on the former bottoms of the reservoir so effective? What is the current state of ecosystems? As it is known, due to several low-water years in a row, the flow along the Syr Darya has decreased and the volume of water in the Northern Aral Sea has lessened from a maximum of 27 to 20 cubic kilometers. The catch of fish has declined and this has a negative impact on the employment of the local population. The morbidity rate of the population is growing again due to desertification and deterioration of water quality... Will the tragedy happen again? What are the moods and plans of the locals? There are a lot of questions and they are all interconnected.

I believe that we need to study the full range of problems and ongoing

work, to update them and to try to solve them as soon as possible and more effectively.

In the Aral Sea Basin Program-4 (ASBP-4), which I mentioned earlier, the environmental direction is highlighted as a separate main area, consisting of 12 project proposals. I would like to note that joint actions are envisaged to adapt to climate change, including measures to adapt the most vulnerable sectors: water and agriculture, drinking water, energy, biodiversity, forest, pastures and mountain ecosystems. It was envisaged to develop a regional action plan for adaptation to climate change and, thanks to the support of the Program of the German Society for International Cooperation GIZ "Green Central Asia", five of our countries have developed and adopted a Regional Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in Central Asia.

It also provides for the dissemination of the best climate-adapted agricultural practices. We will have to develop a regional program for the protection of biological resources in Central Asia, implement measures to preserve and restore ecosystems in the basins of our main rivers - the Amudarya and the Syrdarya, and continue systematic forest plantations in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) zone and on the drained bottom of the Aral Sea.

The following environmental projects provide for the development of a system for monitoring the state of the environment and water resources in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) and on the drained seabed; the development of environmental innovations and technologies in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) zone.

I consider such a project as "Improvement of water quality in rivers and reservoirs, taking into account international standards, elimination and prevention of pollution, including industrial waste" to be very important. Kazakhstan and other countries are working on joining the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of transboundary water-courses and international lakes, and Uzbekistan has recently joined it.

Reducing the risks of natural disasters associated with floods, mudflows and droughts in the Aral Sea basin, studying the state of glaciers in the upper reaches of transboundary rivers, developing transboundary eco-corridors, regional networks of specially protected natural areas for the conservation of biodiversity is far from an incomplete list of those projects that we must promote during our IFAS chairmanship. If we talk about new initiatives that will be carried out within the framework of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the IFAS, then this is the creation of a long-term and sustainable regional cooperation mechanism for the effective use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region in the fields of irrigation, hydropower and ecology.

Systematic work is also needed to implement a unified automated system for accounting, monitoring, management and distribution of water resources in the Aral Sea basin. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at a meeting of the Council of Heads of States-Founders of the IFAS held on September 15, 2023 in Dushanbe, called on the parties to begin implementing these initiatives. Strengthening regional cooperation with international development partners, UN structural entities, financial institutions and the donor community plays an important role. It is worthwhile to intensify activities within the framework of generally accepted international environmental conventions, action plans, declarations and joint statements.

In the period of 2024-2026 Kazakhstan will take measures to implement the instructions and agreements reached by the Heads of States at the IFAS Summit on September 15, 2023 in Dushanbe, as well as previously concluded agreements and commitments, which will ensure the consistency of Central Asia's actions to achieve the global SDGs and its positioning as a single region.

Chairperson of the IFAS Executive Committee Askhat Orazbay

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Organized under the banner of the All-India Muslim League. Branches of the party were opened even in the remote corners of the subcontinent. Literature in the form of pamphlets, books, magazines and newspapers was produced to explain the Pakistan demand and distributed widely. The support gained by the All-India Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan was tested after

the failure of the Simla Conference, convened by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, in 1945. Elections were called to determine the respective strength of the political parties. The All-India Muslim League election campaign was based on the Pakistan demand. The Muslim community responded to this call in an unprecedented way. Numerous Muslim parties were formed making

united parliamentary board at the behest of the Congress to oppose the Muslim League. But the All-India Muslim League swept all the thirty seats in the Central Legislature and in the provincial elections also, its victory was outstanding. After the elections, on April 8-9, 1946, the All-India Muslim League called a convention of the newly-elected League members in the

Central and Provincial Legislatures at Delhi. This convention, which constituted virtually a representative assembly of the Muslims of South Asia, on a motion by the Chief Minister of Bengal, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, reiterated the Pakistan demand in clearer terms

To be continued....

Showbiz

BLACKPINK's 'How You Like That' continues to dominate Spotify charts

Despite being on a two-year hiatus, BLACKPINK achieved another milestone



BLACKPINK continues to make history on Spotify with their titular track How You Like That, becoming the first K-pop female group song to hit one billion streams on Spotify.

Despite being on a two-year hiatus, the South Korean girl gang stepped up another milestone, reinforcing its position in the global music industry. With the band achieving a new milestone and the song surpassing one billion streams on the streaming giant, How You Like That marks itself as the first song led by a K-pop Female Group and Korean Solo Song (Non-collab) to achieve this.

Making its way to the ring and surpassing all other South Korean tracks, Blackpink's track dominated the charts, becoming the first and only Korean Solo Song (non-collab) to surpass the mark.

Speaking of the band's fame worldwide, BLACKPINK hosted a concert at the Hanoi-based My Dinh National Stadium on July 2023, drawing a crowd of 70,000 concert-goers, including 3,000 foreigners.

In other news, the band's member Jisoo recently made a hefty donation, giving away all of her profits from her personal YouTube channel to develop mangrove forests in Vietnam.

Tech

Massive solar eclipse 2024 to show in US after 100 years — how is it different?

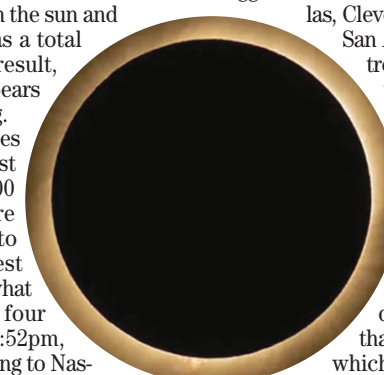
Solar eclipse 2024 is going to rule the skies of the United States next month. When the moon totally obscures the sun's face and moves between the sun and the earth, it is known as a total solar eclipse and as a result, the sky darkens and appears to be dawn or setting.

For what Space describes as "the longest and most visible for the US in 100 years", many people are organising road trips to locations with the finest viewing conditions for what is predicted to last for four minutes starting at 1:52pm, April 8, Monday, according to NASA. However, that does not take into consideration the chance of clouds or perhaps rain.

An early viewing forecast has been released by AccuWeather's team of highly skilled meteorologists and long-range forecasts, spanning the

United States from Texas to Maine. The line of totality will pass directly across several of the biggest cities in North America, including Dallas, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Buffalo, San Antonio, Toronto, and Montreal.

Southern Texas, parts of the Ohio Valley, and the Great Lakes region may have the greatest conditions for the complete solar eclipse, according to AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Forecaster Paul Pastelok. More of the Northeast will be visible during this year's eclipse than during the previous one, which occurred on August 21, 2017. Three New York locations—Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and Plattsburgh—are included in astronomy.com's Top 20 spots for the view of the eclipse. When watching a total solar eclipse, safety is the most important consideration, according to Nasa



Tuberculosis can spread via breathing too, scientists warn

It was earlier believed that Tuberculosis (TB) transmits via coughing, sneezing, speaking or laughing. However, a new study has found that even breathing can spread TB germs, The Sun reported. TB is the second most deadliest disease after COVID-19. It is a lung infection which spreads via air. Its symptoms include cough, fever and loss of appetite, among others.

According to the study, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, four in five people, who test positive for TB do not show signs of cough, which was earlier thought to be the key symptom. However, it has now been found that people can

pick up the infection by just breathing near the person who has the killer bug.

The study's author Professor Frank Cobelens, who teaches Global Health at the Amsterdam University Medical Center, said: "A persistent cough is often the entry point for a diagnosis, but if 80% of those with TB don't have one, then it means that a diagnosis will happen later, possibly after the infection has already been transmitted to many others, or not at all."

The study analysed data from more than 600,000 people across 12 countries and found that 82.8% of the people who had TB did not show signs of

persistent cough, while 62.5% had no cough at all.

After studying the results, Frank has urged medics to find new ways of diagnosing the disease so cases are not missed.

He said: "When we take all of these factors into account, it becomes clear that we need to really rethink large aspects of how we identify people with TB, it's clear that current practice, especially in the most resource-poor settings, will miss large numbers of patients with TB."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States saw a 5.9% increase in TB cases in 2022 as compared to 2021.

Health



NA passes resolution demanding Bhutto be declared national democratic hero

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday passed a resolution urging the Federal Government to officially declare former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a Shaheed and national democratic hero. The resolution, moved by Shazia Marri, recognized that the trial and subsequent conviction of former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were a gross miscarriage of justice.

The resolution lauded the struggles of Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan People's Party workers who sacrificed their lives to establish this truth. It appreciated the determination with which President Asif Ali Zardari filed a presidential reference to reopen the case 12 years ago, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who single-mindedly pursued it.

The resolution lauded the Supreme Court of Pakistan for finally acknowledging and accepting the glaring injustice meted out to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto 44 years ago in its judgment. In light of the historic judgment of the court, the resolution demanded that the unjust verdict given in the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto case must be overturned. It also called for conferring the highest civil award, Nishan-e-Pakistan, upon Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Furthermore, the resolution demanded the establishment of the Nishan-e-Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Award for workers and activists who have fought and sacrificed their lives for true democracy in Pakistan.

PM hopeful of Pak-Gulf trade to surpass \$1 bn annually

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that once the Pakistan-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Free Trade Agreement come into effect, the existing bilateral trade volume of USD 1 billion per annum had the potential to enhance manifold.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Commander of the National Guard of the Kingdom of Bahrain General Sheikh Mohammad Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa who called on him to convey the greetings of King of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. The prime minister warmly welcomed General Sheikh Mohammad to Pakistan and thanked the Bahrain leadership for their messages of felicitations on his re-election as prime minister. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The situation in Gaza was also discussed and both sides called for an immediate ceasefire and ensuring urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to the innocent Palestinians, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. The two countries had excellent defence cooperation, and his visit would enhance these relations even further, the prime minister said, adding Pakistan and Bahrain enjoyed longstanding brotherly relations. He referred to the King Hamad Nursing Hospital that was under construction in Islamabad and said the flagship project was King's gift to the people of Pakistan. APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal chaired a meeting to bring major reforms in Planning Commission on March 13. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Planning Ministry and Members Planning Commission. INP

Policies in consultation with business community: Jam Kamal Khan



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday said that the government is business friendly, will make all the policies in consultation of the business community and will take all the chambers of the country along with it.

The Minister expressed these views yesterday while talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtavari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtavari, who congratulated him on assuming charge as Federal Minister of Commerce, said a press release issued by ICCI here.

The solution of the economic crisis is the first priority. We want the support of the business community for the stability of the business. We will provide facilities to the business community for ease of doing business.

The mission of fully facilitating investment and local and foreign investors and under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has come with a strong determination to

overcome the economic challenges facing the country. "I would like to thank President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtavari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtavari for coming to congratulate me."

Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said, he expect increase the volume of trade, especially in key sectors such as mining, livestock, and textiles.

"We urgently need to align with global standards and adopt modern methods, Jam Kamal said that there is a need to move beyond the traditional trade approach and adopt proactive measures to improve Pakistan's position in the global market" he said.

Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtavari said that people across the country, including the business community, have many expectations from the government.

The business community also expects that the government will consult the businessmen, especially the Chambers, in policy making, because the policy made with their consultation will benefit the country and the economy, he said.

The Chamber will work together with the government to deal with the problem of infla-

tion, reduce interest rates, improve exports, increase foreign exchange reserves and revive the economy.

He said that Pakistan has excellent potential to promote exports of IT, pharmaceuticals, textiles and other sectors, so the business community should work with the government to solve the problems of the export sector and create a favorable environment for export promotion.

ICCI will fully cooperate with the Government in its efforts to improve business and economic activities in the country.

Ahsan said the government should start working on the budget proposals in consultation with all chambers of commerce and associations in the country so that a comprehensive document of proposals based on the views of the business community can be presented to the government for the next budget.

On this occasion, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtavari said that the business community will provide its full support to the government for economic stability; the business community is playing the most important role in the development of the economy.

ICCI will work with the newly elected government to promote ease of doing business in the country and improve the economy.

By-elections for 23 constituencies on April 21



ISLAMABAD: By-elections for 23 constituencies, comprising six national and 17 provincial assembly constituencies, would be held on April 21, said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The by-elections for many of these National and Provincial constituencies were postponed from February 8 due to various reasons, including the death of contesting candidates and candidates running for multiple seats. Additionally, some constituencies were vacated by winners of dual seats. According to the schedule released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, by-elections will be held in six National Assembly constituencies, 12 in Punjab, two in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, two in Balochistan, and one in the Sindh Assembly constituency. Polling is being held in NA-08 Bajaur, NA-44 Dera Ismael Khan-I, NA-119 Lahore-III, NA-132 Kasur-II, NA-196 Kamber Shahdadkot-I, and NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad-I constituencies. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly comprises PK-22 Bajaur-IV and PK-91 Kohat-II constituencies, while the Balochistan Assembly includes PB-20 Khuzdar-III and PB-22 Lasbela constituencies. A by-election will be held in the Sindh constituency PS-80 Dadu-I.

The elections are being held in various Punjab Assembly constituencies, including PP-22 Chakwal-Cum-Talagang, PP-32 Gujrat VI, PP-36 Wazirabad-II, PP-54 Narowal-I, PP-93 Bhakkar-V, PP-139 Sheikh-pura-IV, PP-147 Lahore-III, PP-149 Lahore-V, PP-158 Lahore XIV, PP-164 Lahore-XX, PP-266 Rahim Yar Khan-XII, and PP-290 Dera Ghazi Khan-V.

According to the schedule, a public notice will be issued on March 15, 2024. Nomination papers can be filed with the returning officers from March 16 to March 18, 2024. The names of nominated candidates will be published on March 18, 2024.

The deadline for the returning officer to conduct scrutiny of nomination papers is March 21, 2024. On March 25, 2024, appeals can be lodged against the decision of the returning officers regarding the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers.

The deadline for the appellate tribunal to decide on appeals is March 28, 2024. Revised lists of candidates will be published on the same day. March 29, 2024, marks the last date for withdrawal of candidature and publication of the revised list of candidates. Election symbols will be allotted to contesting candidates on March 30, 2024, with polling scheduled for April 21. Contesting candidates who have previously submitted their nomination papers are not required to file new papers or make deposits under relevant laws if election proceedings were halted due to the death of a contesting candidate in constituencies such as NA-8 Bajaur, PK-22 Bajaur-IV, PK-91 Kohat-II, and PP-266 RY Khan-XII. The respective District Election Commissioner will coordinate the transfer of original records from the former Returning Officer to the newly appointed one. APP

UN chief calls for action as women's rights face backsliding, violence

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has highlighted the urgent need to defend women's rights which are under threat, citing a reversal in hard-won progress, increasing violence against women and a growing digital gender divide.

Addressing the opening of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on Monday, the pivotal forum dedicated to promoting and safeguarding the rights of women and girls worldwide, the UN chief stressed the disproportionate impact of wars on women. "In conflict zones around the globe, women and girls are suffering most from wars waged by men," he said, urging immediate ceasefires and humanitarian aid.

Guterres emphasized the appalling situation in Gaza, where over two-thirds of those killed and injured during Israel's offensive are reportedly women and girls. He also noted shocking testi-

monies of sexual violence against Palestinian women in detention settings, house raids and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In Israel, he added, last week's report released by UN Special Representative Pramila Patten highlights sexual violence against women and girls. Guterres also voiced concern over the situation faced by women in other countries, including Afghanistan and Sudan.

"In Afghanistan, the Taliban has issued more than 50 edicts suppressing women's and girls' rights. In Sudan, scores of women have reportedly been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the ongoing conflict," he said. The secretary-general stressed that despite evidence that women's full participation makes peacebuilding much more effective, the number of women in decision-making roles is falling. DNA

Govt seeks banking reforms to stimulate small business growth: Musadik Malik

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Malik, highlighted the Prime Minister's new initiative to stimulate the economy by ensuring banks provide loans to small businesses at the divisional level. Speaking in a TV channel program, Malik, a senior leader from the PMLN emphasized the government's focus on increasing national income, tackling unemployment, and combating inflation. The initiative comes at a crucial time as Pakistan grapples with economic challenges, including high inflation rates and soaring electricity bills. Malik underscored the significance of the upcoming Ramadan period as a time to reflect on the hardships faced by the populace and stressed the need for collective efforts to move the country forward. In his discussion, Malik recalled an instance from his inaugural speech, where the Prime Minister expressed a desire for economic and political reconciliation to advance Pakistan's interests. Furthermore, Malik referenced offers from both the PPP and Shabbaz Sharif, indicating a willingness to form a government if the majority supports it, highlighting a broad consensus on the need for political healing and economic reform. INP

Gandapur hails positive meeting with PM, calls for collaborative solutions

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Wednesday expressed satisfaction following his first meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, highlighting its positive tone and focus on addressing public and provincial concerns. Addressing a joint press conference with federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal and federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Amir Muqam, Gandapur emphasized the importance of cooperation between the federal and the provincial governments in delivering solutions to a number of pressing issues. Following is a recap of the significant discussions and outcomes of the meeting.

Chief Minister Gandapur underscored the constructive dialogue with PM Shehbaz Sharif, emphasizing their discussions on matters ranging from law and order to public welfare. The CM lauded the PM's commitment in providing full support and fulfilling promises made, signaling a collaborative approach to ensure good-

governance. Gandapur stressed the significance of political engagement, advocating for a meeting citing it as a pathway to political resolution.

Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal echoed Gandapur's sentiments, expressing optimism about the talks' outcomes. He highlighted the PM's assurance regarding the settlement of the province's dues by the federal government and directives to address challenges faced by the people during suhoor and iftar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

He further expressed the resolve that the federal government wanted to move with good intentions and was committed to play its positive role in the national development.

Minister for SAFRON Amir Muqam said the collective efforts would be taken to address the challenges being confronting the people of the country. He termed the meeting between the prime minister and chief minister significant in the current scenario. APP



Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazir Tarar chaired 2nd Meeting of the Anti Corruption Task Force.

China's Henan Business Association to invest in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: To promote investment and foster development in various sectors, including livestock, healthcare, the automobile industry, mining, agriculture, and solar power plants, a delegation of prominent Chinese entrepreneurs, investors, and leaders from the 'Henan Foreign Business Exchange Association,' is visiting Pakistan.

Organized by TNC (Top-Notch China) International, a private company headquartered in Lahore, Pakistan, and Zhengzhou, Henan, China, the visit focused on enhancing collaboration between Pakistan and China. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Shafiq Ahmad Khan, CEO TNC International, said that his company is supporting Henan businesses and industries in promoting their ventures throughout Pakistan. The delegation is currently touring major Pakistani cities, including Lahore, Karachi, and

Islamabad, he said. He confirmed that the delegation agreed to establish a food processing factory in Lahore. The Association will invest in this project to facilitate beef exports from Pakistan to China. In response to the delegate's feedback about the Pakistani market, he said following an extensive market visit and productive meetings with local business leaders, the Chinese delegation had shown strong interest in investing in Pakistan. "They not only feel confident and secure about investing in Pakistan but are also committed to sharing information about Pakistan's rapidly growing market across China through their Association." Shafiq emphasized his company's vital connection between Chinese investors and the Pakistani business community, which will facilitate their operations in Pakistan and address their concerns, thereby securing more investments in the future. INP

PTI spokespersons receiving instructions from jail to harm Pakistan: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar on Wednesday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was conspiring against Pakistan by giving a false narrative to the European Union.

"The spokespersons of PTI are getting instructions from jail to harm the country, but no one will be allowed to harm the economy," he said while addressing his maiden press conference after assuming charge as Minister for Information and Broadcasting here. Lashing out at the PTI leadership, the minister said its conspiratorial elements were again trying to attack the country's economy as in the past too, PTI did a heinous act by writing a letter to the International Monetary Fund asking it not to enter into a loan agreement with the Pakistan government.

He said that the PTI spokespersons were getting instructions from Adiala jail to harm Pakistan. Tarar alleged that the founder of PTI had tried to make this country default but with the grace of Allah and Shehbaz Sharif's personal interest, Pakistan entered into an agreement with the IMF. He said now again the PTI

leadership wanted to sabotage the agreement with the IMF through another letter.

He asked the question as to in what capacity were they writing this letter to the IMF.

"Protecting the state of Pakistan and the national interest is our first responsibility. Strategies and steps are being taken for revival of the economy," Tarar maintained.

The minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was working day and night for the improvement of the economy and daily he chaired three to four meetings on the economy only. He said that the prime minister was working to end inflation and unemployment in the country.

The minister said on the other hand there was a political party which did not see anything beyond itself, and it did not care about the national interests or integrity of Pakistan.

He said Pakistan could earn precious foreign exchange if GSP plus status from EU continued, it would help create more job opportunities and strengthen rupee as a currency.

"If Pakistan has GSP plus status, our exports

will increase, rupee will become stable, inflation will be reduced and employment opportunities will be provided", Ataulah Tarar remarked.

At the start of his press conference he assured that he would try his best to take measures for the welfare of media workers and journalists.

"The doors of the Ministry of Information are opened for journalists and will try to play the role of a bridge between the government and the media," he added.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had started working on a strategy to deal with the challenges faced by the economy as soon as he assumed office. He said it was an honour that yesterday, Bloomberg magazine mentioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding his potential for betterment of Pakistan's economy.

The minister said that Bloomberg also termed the choice of Muhammad Aurangzeb as finance minister as the best choice who as an economist had vast experience at global level.

Tarar said that Bloomberg also mentioned the policies of the Prime Minister for revival of the economy.

Replying to a question, he said that

these elements were contacting the European Union and asking them to withdraw the GSP plus status, which was tantamount to a conspiracy and nefarious attempt to make the poor people of Pakistan suffer.

To another question, he said Imran Khan was living a lavish life in jail, adding the founder of PTI had been given not only a room but the entire gallery for walk.

According to the prison manual of 1978, every prisoner was allowed one meeting in a week, but the founder chairman PTI was allowed four meetings in a week, he added.

The minister said one meeting was held with lawyers, one with friends, one meeting with political associates and one meeting with family members. Since Imran Khan had been in prison, he had met hundreds of people, the minister informed.

Besides, he said, Imran was given exercise equipment in jail.

About PTI, he said, these were the people who attacked and destroyed the memorials of the martyrs on May 9 and ransacked the residence of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Lahore. APP